

# On the Beat

Minneapolis VA  
Health Care System

March 2014



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*"On the Beat" is published monthly for patients, employees, volunteers and friends of the Minneapolis VA Health Care System.*

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# Veterans Parking Ramp Opens



It took less than a year to build the ramp with 520 spaces

Months ahead of schedule, the Minneapolis VA Veterans Parking Ramp opened Monday, March 17. The first Veteran to park was Mike Judd who appeared surprised as he rolled into the ramp at 6:10 a.m. to be greeted by Minneapolis VA Health Care system director Patrick Kelly, several police officers and the VA photographer. The 520-space ramp is open to patients during normal work hours Monday-Friday. Staff may park in the ramp during weekends and off tours. In addition to 100 spaces designated for handicapped-accessible vehicles, there are spaces for 11 vans and 14 motorcycles. The \$10 million four-story structure was built by Division 21, a veteran-owned St. Paul based company. Construction began in April 2013 and was scheduled for completion in July of this year. When asked how the ramp was able to open sooner than scheduled, chief engineer Steve Challeen said, "A good design, a good contractor and good weather." Kudos to Mark Angell, of the Minneapolis VA engineering department, who was the project manager of the project. Check out the Minneapolis VA Intranet site for details on surface lot parking changes resulting from the ramp opening.



Director Kelly greets first Veteran

**ON THE COVER** – Betty Wall Strofus trained U.S. airmen during WW II. Recently, she recounted her experience at the Minneapolis VA. See Page 8.





**Peter Marshall, MD, says long-term use of opioid medications poses risks to patients**

## Minneapolis VA Program to Reduce Use Of Chronic Pain Meds Becomes National Model

An initiative launched at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center in 2011 has significantly reduced the use of opioids among the veteran patients under its care, thus improving their chances for a better quality of life.

“Since starting the program, we’ve been able to decrease high-dosage opioid use among our patients by nearly 70 percent,” said Dr. Peter Marshall, director of Primary Care Pain Management at the Minneapolis VA. “We use a team approach. Our primary care doctors, pharmacists, and mental health professionals all work together to help our patients reduce their long-term dependence on these drugs.”

The Minneapolis VA’s Opioid Safety Initiative has been so successful, in fact, that it appears to be headed for nationwide adoption by the VA. “Early results give us hope,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, “that we can reduce the use of opioids for veterans suffering with chronic pain and share these best practices across our healthcare networks.”

Marshall said VA is clearly moving in a new direction when it comes to pain management.

“We’re moving toward less pills, less shots, and more self-management of chronic pain by teaching patients how to change their behaviors, as well as their lifestyles,” he said. “The whole idea behind VA’s Opioid Safety Initiative is to teach veterans how to manage their pain in a more healthy way.”

But there will be challenges. Patients as well as their health care professionals will need to adopt a different mindset when it comes to dealing with pain.

“This change will require a shift away from simple answers,” Marshall warned. “Additional training and support will be needed to build pain management skills for front line primary care teams, and to provide the necessary education to patients regarding the benefits of alternative approaches to managing chronic pain.”

Chances are it won’t be easy. After all, asking someone to give up their pain meds can be a hard sell.

“Opioids work well in patients who are in acute pain,” Marshall said. “Maybe you’ve been seriously injured, or just had surgery. Maybe you’re dying of cancer. In these instances, opioids are appropriate.

“But when you use them over a long period of time to control chronic pain, it’s a different story,” he continued. “There’s considerable and growing evidence of the harms caused by opioid pain medications, especially at high doses. Your body adjusts to the dose. You need higher and higher doses to get the same relief.

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# Congressman Pays a Visit to Minneapolis VA



*Veteran chats with (L-R) Rep. Ellison, aide Mike Siebenaler, interns SImge Okut & Pounnaphone Phomtalikhith*

Congressman Keith Ellison (D-Minneapolis) is clearly proud of his son, a member of the U.S. Army. Upon arrival in the director's office at the Minneapolis VA for a visit and briefing with leadership on Feb. 25, it only took a few minutes for him to open up his notebook tablet to show recent photos of his son, Elijah. Director Patrick Kelly, Associate Director Erik Stalhandske and Chief of Staff Kent Crossley, MD, briefed the congressman on programs at the Minneapolis VA. Later, Ellison and his aides visited the polytrauma center, transitional rehab unit and Spinal Cord Injury and Disorder Center where he interacted with several staff members and patients.



*Rep. Ellison (c) shows Dr. Crossley (l) and Director Kelly photos of his son*

## MINNEAPOLIS VA NEWSMAKERS

### Minneapolis VA Receives Two Network Star Awards

- Facility Clinical Process – Opioid Safety Initiative team of **Anders Westanmo, EJ Jones, Peter Marshall MD and Kevin Burns;**
- Spread of Strong Practice: Implementing a Data Driven Approach to Clinical Management in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation by Minneapolis team of **Jack Avery, Mandy Smoot and Mike Armstrong, MD.**

**J. Riley McCarten, MD**, a neurologist at the Minneapolis VA, was quoted in lengthy *Star Tribune* article on March 17 on the mini-Cog test to determine early signs of dementia. Developed at the University of Washington, the Minneapolis VA conducted an extensive study of the test in 8,000 veterans. The test is now used widely in health care settings around the country.

**Andrea Bershow, MD**, was quoted in a *New York Times* article March 18 on laser treatment for nail fungus. Based on her research, published last year, Bershow said she does not recommend laser treatment to her patients. She said, “The studies (supporting laser treatment) that have shown efficacy have been small, they haven’t been randomized controlled trials, and most of them have been funded by the actual laser companies.”

**Jamie Matthews, MS, RN** has been named Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM). She is currently Patient Safety Manager. Effective April 7, she will start working part-time in her new WVPM role.

**Connie Jaenicke, NP**, will continue in her part-time role as interim WVPM through May.

**Apostolos Georgopoulos, MD**, and **Brian Engdahl, PhD**, appeared on *Minnesota Military Radio* on March 1. They discussed the work at the Minneapolis VA Brain Sciences Center on PTSD, flashbacks and resiliency. Audio available at [minnesotamilitaryradiohour.com](http://minnesotamilitaryradiohour.com).

### VA Doc Receives Top Award from Diabetes Group

**Frank Q. Nuttall, MD, PhD**, Chief of the Endocrinology, Metabolism and Nutrition Section at the Minneapolis VA, has been awarded the “**2014 Outstanding Physician-Clinician Award in Diabetes**” by the American Diabetes Association. It is the Association’s highest scientific award for an individual actively involved in the clinical care of patients with diabetes. It honors Dr. Nuttall’s achievements and career as both a mentor and provider. The Senior Faculty of the Endocrinology Department at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester submitted the nomination for this highly competitive award. Dr. Nuttall is also a professor of medicine at the University of Minnesota.



**Gail Sebesta**, a 29-year VA employee, decided to embrace winter and the fresh 12 inches of snow that fell overnight in February. Although Gail, an LPN, typically walks the mile to work, she thought “Why not use my snow-shoes.” “It was funny that people in cars were waving and honking as they passed by,” stated Gail. Gail found it comical that a couple of days prior to snow-shoeing to work, she was assigned to a “geriatric” team for healthcare. Gail laughed, “I thought Geriatrics? – Ha!”



Dr. Nuttall



## NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

# VA Dietitians: Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right

National Nutrition Month® is a nutrition education and information campaign created annually in March by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. The 2014 National Nutrition Month theme is "Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right." Eating healthy and enjoying your food is not mutually exclusive. The theme this month promotes trying and experiencing new flavors or foods you may not have thought of trying in the past! Good nutrition plays a huge role in maintaining optimal health and eating is a big part of society and culture. Finding enjoyable ways to eat nutritious meals such as using different spices, herbs, trying new fruits and vegetables, as well as combining different flavors can make eating healthy fun! A



Registered Dietitian can guide and motivate you with out-of-the-box strategies to help with healthy eating that is sustainable for a lifetime.

**Our PACT Dietitians offer many services that can be personally tailored to your lifestyle.**

**Teams Orange & White:** Emily Belgarde, RD, LD, CNSC

**Teams Pink & Green:** Kori Geinert, RD, LD

**Teams Forest & Purple:** Renee Wellberg, RD, LD

**Teams Red & Blue:** Amber Standish, RD

(L-R) Emily Belgarde, Kori Geinert, Renee Wellberg, and Amber Standish.

## What a Registered Dietitian Can Do for You

**-The highest level of nutrition counseling.** Anyone can call themselves a nutritionist, but only a registered dietitian (RD) has completed multiple layers of education and training established by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. In addition to holding a bachelor's degree, an RD must fulfill a specially designed, accredited nutrition curriculum, pass a rigorous registration exam, and complete an extensive supervised program of practice at a health care facility, foodservice organization or community agency.

**-Personally tailored advice.** When you see an RD, the last thing you'll get is one-size-fits-all diet advice. After learning about your health history, favorite foods, eating and exercise habits, an RD will help you set goals and prioritize. Follow-up visits will focus on maintenance and monitoring your progress.

**-Help managing chronic diseases.** If you have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes or cancer it can be hard to know what to eat. An RD can review your lab results and provide education about the nutrients that affect it and help you come up with a plan to improve your health!

**-Guidance navigating food allergies, sensitivities and intolerances.** An RD can teach you how to read food labels so you'll know which ingredients to avoid and help you find substitutions to keep your diet balanced and tasty, too.

**-A weight loss program that really works.** A registered dietitian will partner with you to develop a safe, effective weight loss plan that you can stick with for the long haul.

## VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

### Cargill Donates New Mattresses To Fisher House I

Thanks to the Cargill Grain and Oilseeds North America (GOSCNA) Community Involvement Team and the Cargill AgHorizons Community Involvement Team, the Minneapolis VA's original Fisher House now has 16 new mattresses, box springs and mattress pads valued at \$10,829! Cargill's Community Involvement teams' generosity will provide a comfortable night's rest for thousands of our Veterans' families staying at the Fisher House!



Cargill staff pictured are (L-R) Jon Kamka, Vicki Pooler, Lindsay Saathoff, Kristina Gorham, Steve Thyre

### VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Hellen Ferguson Helps Keep Us Fit

Does your New Year's resolution involve getting more exercise? A visit to meet Hellen Ferguson in the Employee Fitness Center may be just what you need! Hellen attended school to become a personal trainer and this volunteer assignment is the perfect fit. What a great benefit to our employees to have someone with her qualifications to assist them.

Hellen performs a variety of duties including greeting everyone with a smile, providing equipment orientation, proper use and exercises. She even becomes their own personal cheering section to help them attain their goals. Staff who have worked with her appreciates her knowledge, patience, and friendly personality. She also ensures the equipment is sanitized, cleans the general area, assists with clerical tasks and helps with the annual VA 2K Walk & Roll.



Trainer Hellen Ferguson

Hellen's background includes free-lance web design. She has completed a higher level of personal training certification and earned her "WITS" certificate. In her spare time, Hellen enjoys biking, kayaking and reading. She loves to play outdoors. Hellen believes volunteering is empowering because it is fun and you learn a lot from other people. It encourages her to get out and try new things. She is especially proud of her volunteer assignment since she knows that through exercise, she is helping others in their daily lives. Hellen said, "I love to volunteer so much that I would do it five days a week if I could. It gives me personal gratification because I know I am making a difference!" For more information on volunteering, contact [vhaminvol@va.gov](mailto:vhaminvol@va.gov) or call (612) 725-2050. **By Rhonda Boisvert, Asst. Director, Voluntary & Community Services.**



# ***Betty Wall Strofus, Women's Airforce Pilot, Recounts History***



On March 3, the Minneapolis VA Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) hosted a special event in honor of National Women's History Month titled, "A WASP's Experience During WWII."

The one-hour program featured guest speaker Betty Wall Strohfus, who was an original member of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) in 1943.

WASP was formed to organize and use the talents of more than 1,000 women aviators who had been flying as civilians in order to aid the war effort. They assumed some of the duties male pilots had been assigned, thus freeing men for combat roles overseas.

Betty grew up in Faribault, Minnesota. After high school, she learned about the Sky Club at the Faribault airport. Using her bicycle as collateral, she borrowed the \$100 needed for membership in the Sky Club and found that being up in the air was where she belonged.

Betty learned about the Women's Airforce Service Pilots in 1942. She was one of more than 25,000 women who volunteered for the program; one of 1800 accepted for training; and one of just over 1000 who earned her wings.

Betty helped train gunners on the ground and in the air. She would tow long muslin sleeves behind a B-26 for target practice (with live ammunition) by diving fighters. At other times, she would dive in at bombers in pursuit planes and the bomber crew would shoot at her with camera guns.



On one particular flight operation, Betty was given the mission of diving in on an infantry division hunkered down in a bunker. Although the order stated not to fly under 500 feet, she mistook it to read "below 50 feet." From the distance, she could see the "boys in the bunker facing north, searching the sky for the intruder."

Knowing this was combat training, Betty took the initiative to circle south and approach from the rear on a surprise attack. As she passed *just* over the bunker, all the boys hit the deck. After another run on the bunker, she landed her plane and was greeted by an irate lieutenant demanding to see the pilot of the plane, not realizing Betty WAS the pilot. He promptly scolded her that his "boys" were headed overseas and he wanted them to live to get there.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 9**



# Milestones—Congratulations

## 40 YEARS

**Betty White**  
Specialty Care

## 35 YEARS

**Elizabeth Banaszewski**  
Primary Care

**Robyn Owings**  
HR

**Charles Billington**  
Primary Care

## 30 YEARS

**Mary Lee Swain**  
Primary Care

**Susan Catchings**  
Primary Care

**Emily Mutter**  
Specialty Care

**William Spring Jr**  
Mental Health

**Julie Rowan**  
Primary Care

**Randolph Easter**  
Extended Care/Rehab

## 25 YEARS

**James Mulbah**  
Environmental Health

**Shelly Giencke**  
Primary Care

## 20 YEARS

**John Campbell**  
Primary Care

## 15 YEARS

**Kevin Marihart**  
Engineering

**Staci Miskimen**  
Mental Health

**Barbara Olson**  
Imaging

**Dana Nelson**  
Primary Care

## 10 YEARS

**Gregory Lamberty**  
Extended Care

**Kristy Cottle**  
Primary Care

**Jill Johnson**  
Research

**Judith Lu-Lawson**  
Extended Care

**Thomas Rector**  
Research

**Bonnie Suby**  
IT

**Bethany Mack**  
Business Office

**Jennifer Kough**  
Primary Care

**Loretta Patterson**  
Primary Care

**Robert Fillion**  
Environmental Health

**Damon Schleisman**  
HR

## PAIN PROGAM SERVES AS NATIONAL MODEL

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3** “Pain,” he added, “is a complex problem that is not solved with a pill.” Marshall said convincing patients to commit to a more comprehensive approach to pain management will pose challenges. “This kind of approach takes a lot more engagement from the patient,” he said. “We’ll need to monitor them closely. We’ll need constant feedback from them. They’ll need to know they have a team around them, helping them on this journey. We are focusing on how to help people live a more normal life, even if they have chronic pain that can’t be cured. We’re trying to treat the whole person.” **By Tom Cramer, VHA Communications**

## WOMEN’S AIR FORCE PILOT RECOUNTS WW II HISTORY

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8** Betty replied, “Well do you think the enemy is just going to coast in on them wiggle the wings and say “come on fellas, shoot me down?” This type of “surprise” attack later became part of the regular training exercise for future combat airmen. At 95 years of age, Betty’s story telling was inspirational and filled with humor and sentimental memories. The standing ovation by nearly 60 staff members at the conclusion of her presentation was a tribute to her tenacity, spunk, and heartfelt message that dreams are achievable with a “can do” attitude. **By Sandra Wicklund, Public Affairs Specialist**



# Albert Lea VA Clinic Grand Opening!

**Friday, April 25, 2014**  
1-4 pm

Program begins at 1pm, followed by  
open house and tours.

Location: Skyline Mall, 1665 West  
Main Street Albert Lea, MN

**All Veterans and members of the general  
public are invited.**

*Light refreshments will be served.*

The Minneapolis VA's newest community-  
based outpatient clinic (CBOC) will be  
managed by Valor Healthcare, Inc (Humana  
Government Business).

**CLINIC OPEN TO PATIENTS STARTING APRIL 2, 2014**

**FREE\*** \*CRT Monitors and  
TVs with donation  
requested. (see below)

## Electronics Recycling

Hosted by: Minneapolis VA Health Care System

Collection in Parking Lot near new parking ramp

**Thursday, April 17: 11am-5pm**

**VA**  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Minneapolis Health Administration

FREE Items to Bring:	Items NOT to Bring
Game Consoles	Humidifiers
Cellphones and PDAs	Dishwashers
Cords, Cables and Mice	Water Heaters
Flat Panel Monitor and TVs (LCD/LED)	Space Heaters
Switches, Routers and Hubs	Washers and Dryers
CPUs, Memory and Disk Drives	Refrigerators/Freezers
Laptops and Desktop Computers	
Satellite, Cable and TiVo Receivers	
Peripheral Cards and Hardware	

And more: if it has a battery or cord, we will likely take it!

**Follow the signs for drop-off.  
We'll unload for you.**

**Items with a donation requested:**

- TVs and Monitors (\$15 on CRTs <30")
- TVs and Monitors (\$25 on CRTs >30")
- Console TVs (\$35)
- Rear Projection TVs (\$45)

See [TechDump.org/va-tech-dump](http://TechDump.org/va-tech-dump) for more information on what is and is not accepted.

Data storing devices are sanitized of personal information & data.  
Tax deductible receipt available for all donations.

Questions? Call Tech Dump at 763-432-3117, 1.

**tech dump** 

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**MAY 21, 2014**

# 4TH ANNUAL VA2K

**WALK AND ROLL**



**VA2K** 